

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ISLAMA 02842 220058Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00
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INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMCONSUL KARACHI
AMCONSUL LAHORE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 2842

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PK
SUBJECT: REACTION TO BHUTTO VERDICT- PART 2

REF: ISLAMABAD 2744

1. LAW AND ORDER SITUATION-THE ATMOSPHERE IS CALM BUT
TENSE, WITH A SLIGHT INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF INCIDENTS
REPORTED. THE ARMY REMAINS CLEARLY IN CONTROL, AND
THERE SEEMS TO BE LITTLE IMMEDIATE PROSPECT OF LARGE-SCALE
VIOLENCE. THE MOST VIOLENT INCIDENT ON 20 MARCH TOOK
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PAGE 02 ISLAMA 02842 220058Z

PLACE IN LAHORE, WHERE BHUTTO SUPPORTER GEN (RET)
TIKKA KHAN (FORMER CHIEF OF ARMY STAFF) ADDRESSED A
GATHERING IN THE OLD CITY. THE CROWD, ESTIMATED AT
SEVERAL HUNDRED, THEN FANNED OUT, BURNED SPP VEHICLES,
AND WAS DISPERSED WITH TEAR GAS. TIKKA KHAN WAS ARRESTED.
THE UNIVERSITY OF SIND, IN HYERABAD, AND COLLEGES PESHAWAR HAVE
BEEN CLOSED.

2. PROMINENTLY REPORTED FRONT PAGE OF MARCH 21 PAK TIMES WAS ANNOUNCEMENT THAT TOTAL OF 910 PRISONERS HAVE BEEN FREED THUS FAR UNDER GENERAL AMNESTY IN BALUCHISTAN, PROCLAIMED 1 JAN 1978, AND THAT ALL TROOPS IN INTERIOR BALUCHISTAN WILL BE WITHDRAWN BY END OF APRIL. WHILE POSSIBLY COINCIDENTAL, INTENT OF GOVERNMENT IN PUBLISHING IS PROBABLY TO COUNTERACT NEWS OF DISTURBANCES ELSEWHERE.

3. PAK TIMES REPORTED MARCH 21 A BBC REPORT THAT PLEAS TO COMMUTE BHUTTO'S DEATH SENTENCE HAD BEEN RECEIVED FROM TURKEY, LIBYA, UAE, AND YEMEN ARAB REPUBLIC, AS WELL AS FROM AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL. JANG HAS REPORTED STUDENT DEMONSTRATION ON BHUTTO'S BEHALF IN SRINAGAR. BHUTTO HAS NOT YET FILED AN APPEAL TO THE SUPREME COURT, BUT PAK TIMES MAR 20 AND AMERICAN NEWSMEN REPORT THAT BHUTTO'S COUNSEL SAYS HE IS PREPARING AN APPEAL.

4. AS NOTED REFTTEL, MEETINGS OF MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATION WITH POLITICAL LEADERS CONTINUE, TODAY WITH LEADERS OF AZAD KASHMIR POLITICAL PARTIES. PURPOSE OF THESE IS PRESUMABLY TO CONVEY IMPRESSION ELECTIONS ARE STILL BEING PLANNED, EVEN IF THEY ARE NOT IMMINENT, AND TO KEEP THE DIALOGUE GOING WITH NON-PPP POLITICIANS EVEN WHILE POLITICAL ACTIVITY REMAINS PROSCRIBED.
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PAGE 03 ISLAMA 02842 220058Z

5. COMMENT: THE TEMPO OF DISTURBANCES IS PICKING UP A BIT, THE MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATIO IS TIGHTLY IN CONTROL, AND RESENTMENT AGAINST THE LID THE MLA HAS CLAMPED DOWN IS REPORTEDLY SPREADING. ONGOING STUDENT ELECTIONS ON SOME CAMPUSES PROVIDE A NATURAL FORUM AND FOCUS FOR DISTURBANCES, AS WILL ELECTIONS OF OFFICE-BEARERS IN MANY OF PAKISTAN'S BAR ASSOCIATIONS LTER THIS MONTH. A NATURAL FOCUS OF ATTENTION ALSO MAY WELL BE PAKISTAN NATIONAL DAY, ON 23 MARCH, WHEN CROWDS WILL BE OUT AND PARADES WILL BE HELD; PPP ACTIVISTS MAY ATTEMPT SOME ATTENTION-GETTING EVENTS FOR THAT DATE.
HUMMEL

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